

# THE HOUSE OF THE TREES and other Poems

BY EDHELWYN WETHERALD



79383

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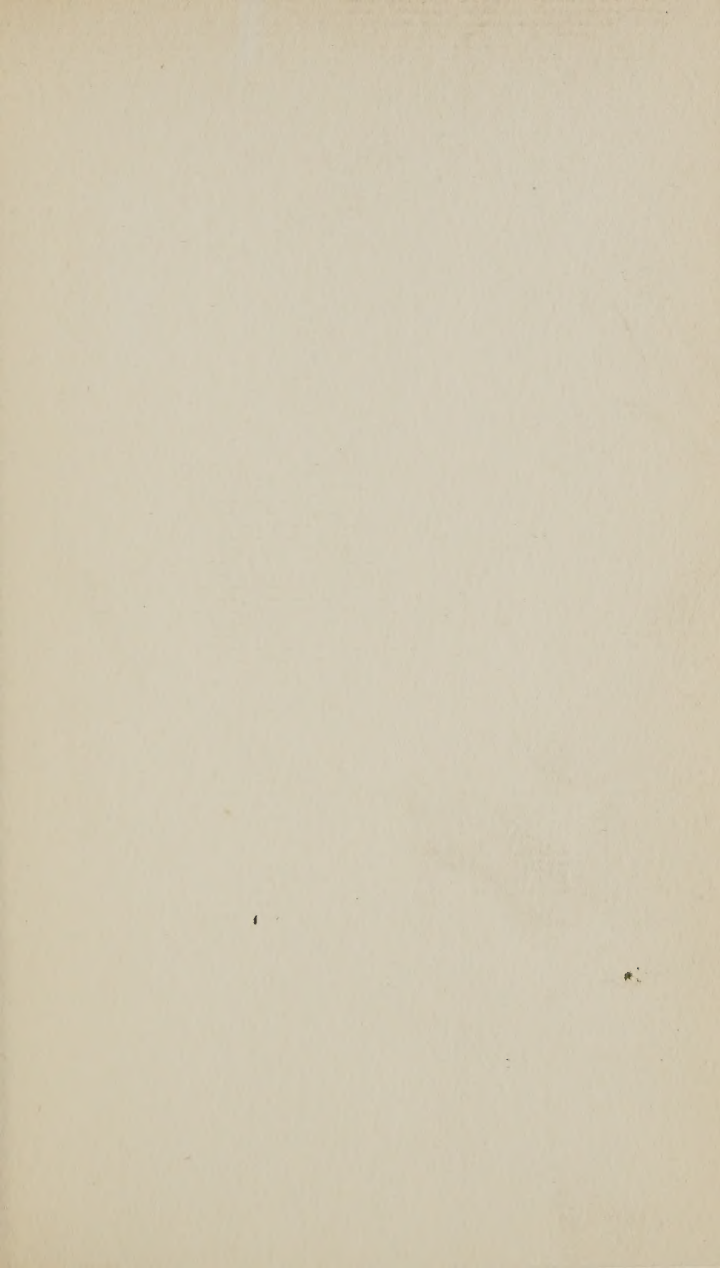
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# THE HOUSE OF THE TREES & OTHER POEMS • ETHELWYN • • WETHERALD •



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To F. B.

79383



Many of the poems in this volume are printed here for the first time; several, however, have appeared in either the "New York Independent," the "New England Magazine," the "Youth's Companion," the "Toronto Week," or the "Travelers' Record," and to their editors thanks are due for permission to reprint them.



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# The House of the Trees



# The House of the Trees

OPE your doors and take me in,  
Spirit of the wood ;  
Wash me clean of dust and din,  
Clothe me in your mood.

Take me from the noisy light  
To the sunless peace,  
Where at midday standeth Night,  
Signing Toil's release.

All your dusky twilight stores  
To my senses give ;  
Take me in and lock the doors,  
Show me how to live.

Lift your leafy roof for me,  
Part your yielding walls,  
Let me wander lingeringly  
Through your scented halls.

Ope your doors and take me in,  
Spirit of the wood ;  
Take me—make me next of kin  
To your leafy brood.

## The Sun on the Trees

**T**HE sun within the leafy woods  
Is like a midday moon,  
So soft upon these solitudes  
Is bent the face of noon.

Loosed from the outside summer blaze  
A few gold arrows stray ;  
A vagrant brilliance droops or plays  
Through all the dusky day.

The gray trunk feels a touch of light,  
While, where dead leaves are deep,  
A gleam of sunshine golden white  
Lies like a soul asleep.

And just beyond dank-rooted ferns,  
Where darkening hemlocks sigh  
And leaves are dim, the bare road burns  
Beneath a dazzling sky.



## Moonlight

**W**HEN I see the ghost of night  
Stealing through my window-pane,  
Silken sleep and silver light  
Struggle for my soul in vain ;  
Silken sleep all balmily  
Breathes upon my lids oppressed,  
Till I sudden start to see  
Ghostly fingers on my breast.

White and skyey visitant,  
Bringing beauty such as stings  
All my inner soul to pant  
After undiscovered things,  
Spare me this consummate pain !  
Silken weavings intercreep  
Round my senses once again,  
I am mortal — let me sleep.

## Pine Needles

**H**ERE where the pine tree to the ground  
Lets slip its fragrant load,  
My footsteps fall without a sound  
Upon a velvet road.

O poet pine, that turns thy gaze  
Alone unto the sky,  
How softly on earth's common ways  
Thy sweet thoughts fall and lie !

So sweet, so deep, seared by the sun,  
And smitten by the rain,  
They pierce the heart of every one  
With fragrance keen as pain.

Or if some pass nor heed their sweet,  
Nor feel their subtle dart,  
Their softness stills the noisy feet,  
And stills the noisy heart.

O poet pine, thy needles high  
In starry light abode,  
And now for footsore passers-by  
They make a velvet road.

## The Sound of the Axe

**W**ITH the sound of an axe on the light  
wind's tracks  
For my only company,  
And a speck of sky like a human eye  
Blue, bending over me,

I lie at rest on the low moss pressed,  
Whose loose leaves downward drip;  
As light they move as a word of love  
Or a finger to the lip.

'Neath the canopies of the sunbright trees  
Pierced by an Autumn ray,  
To rich red flakes the old log breaks  
In exquisite decay.

While in the pines where no sun shines  
Perpetual morning lies.  
What bed more sweet could stay her feet,  
Or hold her dreaming eyes?

No sound is there in the middle air  
But sudden wings that soar,

As a strange bird's cry goes drifting by —  
And then I hear once more

That sound of an axe till the great tree cracks,  
Then a crash comes as if all  
The winds that through its bright leaves blew  
Were sorrowing in its fall.

## The Prayer of the Year

**L**EAVE me Hope when I am old,  
Strip my joys from me,  
Let November to the cold  
Bare each leafy tree;  
Chill my lover, dull my friend,  
Only, while I grope  
To the dark the silent end,  
Leave me Hope!

Blight my bloom when I am old,  
Bid my sunlight cease;  
If it need be from my hold  
Take the hand of Peace.  
Leave no springtime memory,  
But upon the slope  
Of the days that are to be,  
Leave me Hope!

## The Hay Field

**W**ITH slender arms outstretching in the  
sun

The grass lies dead ;  
The wind walks tenderly, and stirs not one  
Frail, fallen head.

Of baby creepings through the April day  
Where streamlets wend,  
Of childlike dancing on the breeze of May,  
This is the end.

No more these tiny forms are bathed in dew,  
No more they reach,  
To hold with leaves that shade them from  
the blue  
A whispered speech.

No more they part their arms, and wreath  
them close  
Again to shield  
Some love-full little nest — a dainty house  
Hid in a field.



For them no more the splendor of the storm,  
The fair delights  
Of moon and star-shine, glimmering faint and  
warm  
On summer nights.

Their little lives they yield in summer death,  
And frequently  
Across the field bereaved their dying breath  
Is brought to me.

## Twilight

**I** SAW her walking in the rain,  
And sweetly drew she nigh ;  
And then she crossed the hills again  
To bid the day good-by.

“ Good-by ! good-by !  
The world is dim as sorrow ;  
But close beside the morning sky  
I'll say a glad Good-morrow ! ”

**O** dweller in the darling wood,  
When near to death I lie,  
Come from your leafy solitude,  
And bid my soul good-by.

Good-by ! good-by !  
The world is dim as sorrow ;  
But close beside the morning sky  
O say a glad Good-morrow !

## The Sky Path

**I** HEAR the far moon's silver call  
High in the upper wold ;  
And shepherd-like it gathers all  
My thoughts into its fold.

Oh happy thoughts, that wheresoe'er  
They wander through the day,  
Come home at eve to upper air  
Along a shining way.

Though some are weary, some are torn,  
And some are fain to grieve,  
And some the freshness of the morn  
Have kept until the eve,

And some perversely seek to roam  
E'en from their shepherd bright,  
Yet all are gathered safely home,  
And folded for the night.

Oh happy thoughts, that with the streams  
The trees and meadows share  
The sky path to the gate of dreams,  
In their white shepherd's care.

## Fall and Spring

**F**ROM the time the wind wakes  
To the time of snowflakes,  
That's the time the heart aches  
Every cloudy day ;  
That's the time the heart takes  
Thought of all its heart-breaks,  
That's the time the heart makes  
Life a cloudy way.

From the time the grass creeps  
To the time the wind sleeps,  
That's the time the heart leaps  
To the golden ray ;  
That's the time that joy sweeps  
Through the depths of heart-deeps,  
That's the time the heart keeps  
Happy holiday.

## The Woodside Way

**I** WANDERED down the woodside way,  
Where branching doors ope with the  
breeze,  
And saw a little child at play  
Among the strong and lovely trees ;  
The dead leaves rustled to her knees ;  
Her hair and eyes were brown as they.

“ Oh, little child,” I softly said,  
“ You come a long, long way to me ;  
The trees that tower overhead  
Are here in sweet reality,  
But you ’re the child I used to be,  
And all the leaves of May you tread.”

## A Rainy Day

**I**T has been twilight all the day,  
And as the twilight peace  
On daily fetters seems to lay  
The finger of release,

So, needless as to tree and flower  
Seem care and fear and pain ;  
Our hearts grow fresher every hour,  
And brighten in the rain.

## When Twilight Comes

**A**LL out of doors for all life's way,  
The fields and the woods and the good  
sunlight;

And then in the chill of the evening gray,  
A sheltered nook and the hearth-fire bright.

No hearth, no shelter attend my way!  
Not late, dear life, linger not too late;  
But before the chill and before the gray,  
Let the sunset gild the grave-stone date.

## Leafless April

**L**EAFLESS April chased by light,  
Chased by dark and full of laughter,  
Stays a moment in her flight  
Where the warmest breezes waft her,  
By the meadow brook to lean,  
Or where winter rye is growing,  
Showing in a lovelier green  
Where her wayward steps are going.

Blithesome April brown and warm,  
Showing slimness through her tatters,  
Chased by sun or chased by storm —  
Not a whit to her it matters.  
Swiftly through the violet bed,  
Down to where the stream is flooding  
Light she flits — and round her head  
See the orchard branches budding !



## The Visitors

**I**N the room where I was sleeping  
The sun came to the floor ;  
Its silent thought went leaping  
To where in woods of yore  
It felt the sun before.

At noon the rain was slanting  
In gray lines from the west ;  
A hurried child all panting  
It pattered to my nest,  
And smiled when sun-caressed.

At eve the wind was flying  
Bird-like from bed to chair,  
Of brown leaves sere and dying  
It brought enough to spare,  
And dropped them here and there.

At night-time without warning,  
I felt almost to pain  
The soul of the sun in the morning,  
And the soul of the wind and rain  
In my sleeping-room remain.

## Autumn Days

**A**UTUMN days are sun crowned,  
Full of laughing breath ;  
Light their leafy feet are dancing  
Down the way to death.

Scarlet-shrouded to the grave  
I watch them gayly go ;  
So may I as blithely die  
Before November snow.

## Woodland Worship

**H**ERE 'mid these leafy walls  
Are sylvan halls,  
And all the Sabbaths of the year  
Are gathered here.

Upon their raptured mood  
My steps intrude,  
Then wait — as some freed soul might wait  
At heaven's gate.

Nowhere on earth — nowhere  
On sea or air,  
Do I as easily escape  
This earthly shape,

As here upon the white  
And dizzy height  
Of utmost worship, where it seems  
Too still for dreams.

## When Days Are Long

**W**HEN twilight late delayeth,  
And morning wakes in song,  
And fields are full of daisies,  
I know the days are long;  
When Toil is stretched at nooning,  
Where leafy pleasures throng,  
When nights o'errun in music,  
I know the days are long.

When suns afoot are marching,  
And rains are quick and strong,  
And streams speak in a whisper,  
I know the days are long.  
When hills are clad in velvet,  
And winds can do no wrong,  
And woods are deep and dusky,  
I know the days are long.

## Out of Doors

**I**N the urgent solitudes  
Lies the spur to larger moods ;  
In the friendship of the trees  
Dwell all sweet serenities.

## Make Room

**R**OOM for the children out of doors,  
For heads of gold or gloom ;  
For raspberry lips and rose-leaf cheeks and  
palms,  
Make room — make room !

Room for the springtime out of doors,  
For buds in green or bloom ;  
For every brown bare-handed country weed  
Make room — make room !

Room for earth's sweetest out of doors,  
And for its worst a tomb ;  
For housed-up griefs and fears, and scorns,  
and sighs,  
No room — no room !

## The Humming Bird

**A** GAINST my window-pane  
He plunges at a mass  
Of buds — and strikes in vain  
The intervening glass.

O sprite of wings and fire  
Outstretching eagerly,  
My soul with like desire  
To probe thy mystery,

Comes close as breast to bloom,  
As bud to hot heart-beat,  
And gains no inner room,  
And drains no hidden sweet.

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## September

**B**UT yesterday all faint for breath,  
The Summer laid her down to die ;  
And now her frail ghost wandereth  
In every breeze that loiters by.  
Her wilted prisoners look up,  
As wondering who hath broke their chain,  
Too deep they drank of summer's cup,  
They have no strength to rise again.

How swift the trees, their mistress gone,  
Enrobe themselves for revelry !  
Ungovernable winds upon  
The wold are dancing merrily.  
With crimson fruits and bursting nuts,  
And whirling leaves and flushing streams,  
The spirit of September cuts  
Adrift from August's languid dreams.

A little while the revellers  
Shall flame and flaunt and have their day,  
And then will come the messengers  
Who travel on a cloudy way.



And after them a form of light,  
A sense of iron in the air,  
Upon the pulse a touch of might  
And winter's legions everywhere.

## The March Orchard

**U**NLEAVED, undrooping, still, they stand,  
This stanch and patient pilgrim band ;  
October robbed them of their fruit,  
November stripped them to the root,  
The winter smote their helplessness  
With furious ire and stormy stress,  
And now they seem almost to stand  
In sight of Summer's Promised Land.

Yet seen through frosty window-panes,  
When bared and bound in wintry chains,  
Their lightsome spirits seemed to play  
With February as with May.  
The snow that turned the skies afrown  
Enwrapt them in the softest down,  
And rains that dulled the landscape o'er  
But left them livelier than before.

But now this June-like day of March  
With patient strength their branches arch,  
Not as unmindful of the breeze  
That makes midsummer melodies,

But knowing Spring a fickle maid,  
And that rough days must dawn and fade  
Before, all blossoming bright, they stand  
In sight of Summer's Promised Land.

## The Blind Man

**T**HE blind man at his window bars  
Stands in the morning dewy dim ;  
The lily-footed dawn, the stars  
That wait for it, are naught to him.

And naught to his unseeing eyes  
The brownness of a sunny plain,  
Where worn and drowsy August lies,  
And wakens but to sleep again.

And naught to him a greening slope,  
That yearns up to the heights above,  
And naught the leaves of May, that ope  
As softly as the eyes of love.

And naught to him the branching aisles,  
Athrong with woodland worshippers,  
And naught the fields where summer smiles  
Among her sunburned laborers.

The way a trailing streamlet goes,  
The barefoot grasses on its brim,  
The dew a flower cup o'erflows  
With silent joy, are hid from him.

To him no breath of nature calls ;  
    Upon his desk his work is laid ;  
He looks up at the dingy walls,  
    And listens to the voice of Trade.

## To the October Wind

OLD playmate, showering the way  
With thick leaf storms in red and gold,  
I'm only six years old to-day,  
    You've made me feel but six years old.  
In yellow gown and scarlet hood  
    I whirled, a leaf among the rest,  
Or lay within the thinning wood,  
    And played that you were Red-of-breast.

Old comrade, lift me up again;  
    Your arms are strong, your feet are swift,  
And bear me lightly down the lane  
    Through all the leaves that drift and drift,  
And out into the twilight wood,  
    And lay me softly down to rest,  
And cover me just as you would  
    If you were really Red-of-breast.

## A Midday in Midsummer

THE sky's great curtains downward steal,  
The earth's fair company  
Of trees and streams and meadows feel  
A sense of privacy.

Upon the vast expanse of heat  
Light-footed breezes pace ;  
To waves of gold they tread the wheat,  
They lift the sunflower's face.

The cruel sun is blotted out,  
The west is black with rain,  
The drooping leaves in mingled doubt  
And hope look up again.

The weeds and grass on tiptoe stand,  
A strange exultant thrill  
Prepares the dazed uncertain land  
For the wild tempest's will.

The wind grows big and breathes aloud  
As it runs hurrying past ;  
At one sharp blow the thunder-cloud  
Lets loose the furious blast.

The earth is beaten, drenched and drowned,  
The elements go mad ;  
Swift streams of joy flow o'er the ground,  
And all the leaves are glad.

Then comes a momentary lull,  
The darkest clouds are furled,  
And lo, new washed and beautiful  
And breathless gleams the world.



## A Slow Rain

**A**DROWSY rain is stealing  
In slowness without stop;  
The sun-dried earth is feeling  
Its coolness, drop by drop.

The clouds are slowly wasting  
Their too long garnered store,  
Each thirsty clod is tasting  
One drop — and then one more.

Oh, ravishing as slumber  
To wearied limbs and eyes,  
And countless as the number  
Of stars in wintry skies,

And sweet as the caresses  
By baby fingers made,  
These delicate rain kisses  
On leaf and flower and blade.

# The Patient Earth

## I

**T**HE patient earth that loves the grass,  
The flocks and herds that o'er it pass,  
That guards the smallest summer nest  
Within her scented bosom pressed,  
And gives to beetle, moth, and bee  
A lavish hospitality,  
Still waits through weary years to bind  
The hearts of suffering human kind.

## II

How far we roamed away from her,  
The tender mother of us all !  
Yet 'mid the city's noises stir  
The sound of birds that call and call,  
Wind melodies that rise and fall  
Along the perfumed woodland wall  
We looked upon with childhood's eyes ;  
The ugly streets are all a blur,  
And in our hearts are homesick cries.

### III

The loving earth that roots the trees  
So closely to her inmost heart,  
Has rooted us as well as these,  
Not long from her we live apart ;  
We draw upon a lengthening string,  
For months perhaps, perhaps for years,  
And plume ourselves that we are free,  
And then — we hear a robin sing  
Where starving grass shows stunted spears,  
Or haycart moving fragrantly  
Where creaking tavern sign-boards swing ;  
Then closer, tighter draws the chain,  
The man, too old and worn for tears,  
Goes back to be a child again.

### IV

The greed that took us prisoner  
First led our steps away from her ;  
For lust of gold we gave up life,  
And sank heart-deep in worldly strife.  
And when Success — belovèd name —  
At last with faltering footsteps came,  
The city's rough, harsh imps of sound  
And Competition's crush and cheat  
Were in her wreath securely bound ;

Her fruits still savored of the street,  
Its choking dust, its wearied feet,  
Her poorest like her richest prize  
Was rotted o'er with envious eyes,  
And sickened with the human heat  
Of hands that strove to clutch it fast,  
And struggling gave it up at last.  
Not so where nature summer-crowned  
Makes fields and woods a pleasure-ground,  
Sky-blest, wind-kissed, and circled round  
With waters lapsing cool and sweet.

## V

O Earth, sweet Mother, take us back !  
With woodland strength and orchard joy,  
And river peace without alloy,  
Flood us who on the city's track  
Have followed stifling sordid years,  
Cleanse us with dew and meadow rain,  
Till life's horizon lights and clears,  
And nature claims us once again.

## At Dawn

**A** SPIRIT through  
My window came when earth was soft  
with dew,  
Close at the tender edge of dawn when all  
The spring was new,

And bore me back  
Along her rose-and-starry tinted track,  
And showed me how the full-winged day  
emerged  
From out the black.

She knew the speech  
Of all the deep-pink blossoms of the peach,  
Told in my ear the meanings of the trees,  
The thoughts of each ;

Explained to me  
The language of the bird and frog and bee,  
The messages the streams and rivers take  
Unto the sea.

Alas ! Alas !  
I have forgot. The dream did from me pass.  
I know not e'en the meaning dear and sweet  
Of common grass.

And now when I  
Roam this strange earth beneath a stranger  
sky,  
Soft syllables of that forgotten speech  
Faint as a sigh,

Come back again,  
With sweet solicitings that urge like pain,  
And brood like love — as full of light and dark  
As April rain.

## In the Crowd

**H**ERE in the crowded city's busy street,  
Swayed by the eager, jostling, hasting  
throng,  
Where Traffic's voice grows harsher and  
more strong,  
I see within the stream of hurrying feet  
A company of trees in their retreat,  
Dew-bathed, dream-wrapped, and with a  
thrush's song  
Emparadising all the place, along  
Whose paths I hear the pulse of Beauty beat.

'T was yesterday I walked beneath the trees,  
To-day I tread the city's stony ways ;  
And still the spell that o'er my spirit  
came  
Turns harshest sounds to shy bird ecstasies,  
Pours scent of pine through murky chimney  
haze,  
And gives each careworn face a woodland  
frame.

## By Fields of Grass

**B**Y fields of grass and woodland silences  
The city's tumult is encamped around ;  
The jingling, clanging, shrieking fiends of  
sound

Expire within the wide world-circling breeze.  
The soul amid a multitude of trees,  
Or grass enveloped on the fragrant ground,  
Is lifted to its utmost starry round,  
And listens to celestial harmonies.

From this unspeakably divine rebirth,  
Its sordid life returning shows through  
rifts

How purely spreads the sky, how musical  
The streams and breezes flow across the  
earth,

How light the tree its fruity load uplifts,  
How easily the weed is beautiful.



## October

**A** GAINST the winter's heav'n of white  
the blood

Of earth runs very quick and hot to-day ;  
A storm of fiery leaves are out at play  
Around the lingering sunset of the wood.  
Where rows of blackberries unnoticed stood,  
Run streams of ruddy color wildly gay ;  
The golden lane half dreaming picks its  
way  
Through 'whelming vines, as through a  
gleaming flood.

O warm, outspoken earth, a little space  
Against thy beating heart my heart shall  
beat,  
A little while they twain shall bleed and  
burn,  
And then the cold touch and the gray, gray  
face,  
The frozen pulse, the drifted winding-sheet,  
And speechlessness, and the chill burial  
urn.

## Winter

**N**OW that the earth has hid her lovely  
brood

Of green things in her breast safe out of  
sight,

And all the trees have stripped them for  
the fight,

The winter comes with wild winds singing  
rude

Hoarse battle songs — so furious in feud

That nothing lives that has not felt their  
bite.

They sound a trumpet in the dead of night  
That makes more solitary solitude.

Against the forest doors how fierce they beat!

Against the porch, against the school-  
bound boy

With crimson cheek bent to his shaggy  
coat.

The earth is pale but steadfast, hearing  
sweet

But far — how far away! the stream of joy

Outpouring from a bluebird's tender  
throat.

## The Snow-Storm

THE great, soft, downy snow-storm like a  
cloak

Descends to wrap the lean world head to  
feet ;

It gives the dead another winding-sheet,  
It buries all the roofs until the smoke  
Seems like a soul that from its clay has  
broke ;

It broods moon-like upon the Autumn  
wheat,

And visits all the trees in their retreat,  
To hood and mantle that poor shiv'ring folk.

With wintry bloom it fills the harshest  
grooves

In jagged pine stump fences. Every sound  
It hushes to the footstep of a nun.

Sweet Charity! that brightens where it  
moves,

Inducing darkest bits of churlish ground  
To give a radiant answer to the sun.

## To February

**O** MASTER-BUILDER, blustering as you  
go

About your giant work, transforming all  
The empty woods into a glittering hall,  
And making lilac lanes and footpaths grow  
As hard as iron under stubborn snow,  
Though every fence stand forth a marble  
wall,  
And windy hollows drift to arches tall,  
There comes a might that shall your might  
o'erthrow.

Build high your white and dazzling palaces,  
Strengthen your bridges, fortify your tow-  
ers,  
Storm with a loud and a portentous lip ;  
And April with a fragmentary breeze,  
And half a score of gentle, golden hours,  
Shall leave no trace of your stern work-  
manship.

## Rest

**F**ROM the depths of dreams I am drawn  
To the inner depth of a pine,  
That near my window keeps the dawn —  
A dawn that is wholly mine.  
Dream-rest and pine-rest,  
And a cool, gray path between —  
A cool, gray path from the night's breast  
To the heart of the living green.

To the depths of dreams I go  
On the sounds of falling rain,  
That in the night-time gently flow  
In a stream on my window-pane.  
Stream-rest and dream-rest,  
And a cool, dark path between —  
A cool, dark path from the rain's breast  
To the heart of the soft unseen.

## The Shy Sun

**T**HE sun went with me to the wood,  
And lingered at the door ;  
One glance he gave from where he stood,  
But dared not venture more,

Nor knew that in the heart of her  
Who felt his presence nigh,  
His love was all the lovelier  
Because his look was shy.

## In April

**W**HEN Spring unbound comes o'er us  
like a flood,

My spirit slips its bars,  
And thrills to see the trees break into bud  
As skies break into stars ;

And joys that earth is green with eager grass,  
The heavens gray with rain,  
And quickens when the spirit breezes pass,  
And turn and pass again ;

And dreams upon frog melodies at night,  
Bird ecstasies at dawn,  
And wakes to find sweet April at her height  
And May still beck'ning on ;

And feels its sordid work, its empty play,  
Its failures and its stains  
Dissolved in blossom dew, and washed away  
In delicate spring rains.

## Apple Blossoms

**A** MID the young year's breathing hopes,  
When eager grasses wrap the earth,  
I see on greening orchard slopes  
The blossoms trembling into birth.  
They open wide their rosy palms  
To feel the hesitating rain,  
Or beg a longed-for golden alms  
From skies that deep in clouds have lain.

They mingle with the bluebird's songs,  
And with the warm wind's reverie;  
To sward and stream their snow belongs,  
To neighboring pines in flocks they flee.  
O doubly crowned, with breathing hopes  
The branches bending down to earth,  
That feel on greening orchard slopes  
Their blossoms trembling into birth.



## The Big Moon

**T**HE big moon came to the edge of the sky,  
And pierced me with its dart;  
I strove to put its brightness by  
Before it burned my heart.

I wrapped the windows thick and well,  
I closely barred the door,  
The light of my penny candles fell  
On low-built wall and floor.

The little room and the little light  
Began to comfort me;  
But I heard — I heard the golden night  
Call like a sounding sea.

I knew the moon swam in the sky,  
And the earth swam in the moon;  
I went outside in the grass to lie,  
To yield to the deadly swoon,

My soul was filled with white moon rain  
Till it ran o'er and o'er.

My soul was thrilled with bright moon pain  
Till it could bear no more;

I stole back through the curtained gloom  
Up stairs unlit and steep,  
And in a low-ceiled darkened room  
My hurt was healed with sleep.

# The Twins

## I

**T**HE old man and his apple-tree  
Are verging close on eighty-three ;  
'T was planted there when he was two,  
And almost side by side they grew.  
How strong and straight they were at eight,  
One leafy, one with curly pate.  
How fine at twenty, how alive  
And prosperous at twenty-five.  
What health and grace in every limb,  
Was said of it — was said of him.

## II

Then when he blushed, a marriage groom,  
The tree outvied the bride in bloom ;  
And in the after years there played  
Within its ample sweep of shade  
A little child, with cheeks as red  
As had the apples overhead.  
Her father called the tree his twin,  
And surely it was next of kin.

### III

The best of life came to the twain,  
The beauty of the stars, the rain,  
Soft stepping, and the liquid notes  
That overflow from feathered throats.  
Unto the soul that selfish strives  
Was borne the fragrance of their lives,  
And anxious folk with brow down bent  
Bathed in their dewy cool content.  
They held their heads up in the storm,  
And gloried when the winds were warm;  
Their shadows lay but at their feet,  
And all of life above was sweet.

### IV

And now that they are eighty-three  
They're almost as they used to be.  
The blossoms are as pink and white,  
The old man's heart as pure and light.  
The apples — fragrant balls of flame —  
Are looking, tasting, just the same.  
And just the same his uttered thought  
Of mirth and wisdom quaintly wrought.  
Through all their years they kept their truth,  
Their strength, and that sweet look of youth.

## Autumn Fire

**T**HE fires of Autumn are burning high ;  
Bright the trees in the woods are blazing—

A wall of flame from the brilliant sky  
Down to the fields where the cattle are grazing.

O the warm, warm end of the year !  
Even the shrubs their red hearts render ;  
All the bushes are bright with cheer  
And the tamest vine has a touch of splendor.

The fires of Autumn are burning low ;  
Blow, ye winds, and cease not blowing !  
Blow the flames to a ruddier show,  
Heap the coals to a hotter glowing.  
Ah, the chill, chill end of the year !  
Naught is left but a few leaf flashes ;  
White is the death stone, white and drear,  
Over a desolate world of ashes.

## In the Grass

**F**ACE downward on the grass in reverie,  
I found how cool and sweet  
Are the green glooms that often thoughtlessly  
I tread beneath my feet.

In this strange mimic wood where grasses  
lean —  
Elf trees untouched of bark —  
I heard the hum of insects, saw the sheen  
Of sunlight framing dark,

And felt with thoughts I cannot understand,  
And know not how to speak,  
A daisy reaching up its little hand  
To lay it on my cheek.

## The Fields of Dark

**T**HE wreathing vine within the porch  
Is in the heart of me,  
The roses that the noondays scorch  
Shall burn in memory ;  
Alone at night I quench the light,  
And without star or spark  
The grass and trees press to my knees,  
And flowers throng the dark.

The leaves that loose their hold at noon  
Drop on my face like rain,  
And in the watches of the moon  
I feel them fall again.  
By day I stray how far away  
To stream and wood and steep,  
But on my track they all come back  
To haunt the vale of sleep.

The fields of light are clover-brimmed,  
Or grassed or daisy-starred,  
The fields of dark are softly dimmed,  
And safely twilight-barred ;

But in the gloom that fills my room  
I cannot fail to mark  
The grass and trees about my knees,  
The flowers in the dark.



## Children in the City

**T**HOUSANDS of childish ears, rough  
chidden,

Never a sweet bird-note have heard,  
Deep in the leafy woodland hidden

Dies, unlistened to, many a bird.  
For small soiled hands in the sordid city  
Blossoms open and die unbreathed ;

For feet unwashed by the tears of pity  
Streams around meadows of green are  
wreathed.

Warm, unrevelled in, still they wander,  
Summer breezes out in the fields ;  
Scarcely noticed, the green months squander  
All the wealth that the summer yields.

Ah, the pain of it ! Ah, the pity !  
Opulent stretch the country skies  
Over solitudes, while in the city  
Starving for beauty are childish eyes.

## Where Pleasures Grow

**W**HERE pleasures grow as thick as  
grass,  
And joys of silence, soft, profound,  
Are sweeter e'en than joys of sound,  
The long, long days of summer pass.

I see them sitting in the sun,  
Or moving river-like between  
The climbing and down-bending green,  
I watch them vanish one by one,

And strive to clasp them as they flee,  
But only hold their shadows fast —  
The summer shadows that they cast  
Upon the path of memory.

## In the Heart of the Woods

**I** LOST my heart in the heart of the woods ;  
It stayed there through the day,  
It stayed there through the solitudes  
Of a night with no moon ray.

Through the day so dusty, worn and sere  
My heart was cool and free,  
Through the wild night, tempest-tossed and  
drear,  
My heart slept peacefully.

I found my heart in the heart of the woods,  
I looked on it and smiled ;  
And over it still the woodland broods,  
As a mother over her child.

## Frost

**W**HEN the sun is growing weaker,  
And his look is meek and meeker,  
Comes the frost — the pale betrayer —  
Light of foot, a stealthy slayer.

In the night abroad he stealeth,  
For each trembling leaf he feeleth;  
Something softened by its pleading,  
Kills it not but leaves it bleeding.

## The Chipmunk

**T**O-DAY the green hill was at strife  
With me; it robbed my feet of life.  
The wind that loudly speaks his mind,  
Said in my presence nothing kind.  
The sky's clear face was from me turned,  
Behind a cloud his great fire burned.

An exile in his native cot,  
Who finds his very name forgot,  
Was I this afternoon, until  
At the wood's edge behind the hill,  
A chipmunk flashed, and leapt a limb,  
And took my heart away with him.

## Give Me the Poorest Weed

**G**IVE me the poorest weed  
To satisfy my spirit's need.  
The brownest blade of grass  
Will know and greet me when I pass.

Of their own feeling wrought,  
They live like simple, vital thought ;  
The mind could not invent  
A better thing than Nature meant.

## The Weeks that Walk in Green

**T**HE weeks that walk in green  
Came to my willow lane,  
And wrapt me in their leafy screen  
Against the sun and rain.

Then far and far we went  
By stream and wood and steep,  
Until, all love-worn and joy-spent,  
I yielded me to sleep.

And they — they died unseen ;  
Their ghosts are haunting me —  
The gentle ghosts that walk in green  
Through vales of memory.

## Noonday of the Year

**T**HE streams that chattered in the cold  
Are sleeping in the sun ;  
The winds of March were overbold  
Until their race was run.

O mad with haste the morning went,  
But now love-warm and deep,  
The fields, their first ambition spent,  
Lie in their noonday sleep.



## The Wind World

**A**LONE within the wind I lie,  
And reck not how the seasons go ;  
The winter struggling through its snow,  
The light-winged summer flitting by.

I am not of the cloud nor mold,  
I move between the stars and flowers,  
I know the tingling touch of hours  
When all the storms of night unfold.

Within the wind world drifting free  
I hear naught of earth's murmurings,  
Naught but the sound of songs and wings  
Among the tree-tops comes to me.

At night earth stars flash out below,  
And heaven stars shine out above ;  
I look down on the lights of love,  
And feel the higher love-lights glow.

## At the Window

**H**OW thick about the window of my life  
Buzz insect-like the tribe of petty frets :  
Small cares, small thoughts, small trials, and  
    small strife,  
Small loves and hates, small hopes and  
    small regrets.

If 'mid this swarm of smallnesses remain  
    A single undimmed spot, with wondering  
    eye  
I note before my freckled window-pane  
    The outstretched splendor of the earth  
    and sky.

## Come Back Again

**C**HILD-THOUGHTS, child-thoughts,  
come back again !

Faint, fitful, as you used to be ;  
The dusty chambers of my brain  
Have need of your fair company,  
As when my child-head reached the height  
Of the wild rose-bush at the door,  
And all of heaven and its delight  
Bloomed in the flow'rs the old bush bore.

Come back, sweet long-departed year,  
When, sitting in a hollow oak,  
I heard the sheep bells far and clear,  
I heard a voice that silent spoke,  
And felt in both a vague appeal,  
And both were mingled in my dreams  
With leaves that viewless breezes feel,  
And skies clear mirrored in the streams.

Child-heart, child-thoughts, come back again !  
Bring back the tall grass at my cheek,  
The grief more swift than summer rain,  
The joy that knew no words to speak.

The buttercup's uplifted gold  
That strives to reach my hands in vain,  
The love that never could grow cold —  
Child-heart, child-thoughts, come back  
again !

## A Rainy Morning

**T**HE low sky, and the warm, wet wind,  
And the tender light on the eyes ;  
A day like a soul that has never sinned,  
New dropped from Paradise.

And 't is oh, for a long walk in the rain,  
By the side of the warm, wet breeze,  
With the thoughts washed clean of dust and  
stain  
As the leaves on the shining trees.

## June Apples

**G**REEN apple branches full of green apples  
All around me unfurled,  
Here where the shade and the sunlight  
dapples  
A grass-green, apple-green world.

Little green children stirred with the heaving  
Of the warm breast of the air,  
When your old nurse, the wind, is grieving  
Comfortlessly you fare.

But now an old-time song she is crooning,  
Nestle your heads again,  
While I dream on through the golden noon-  
ing,  
Or look for the first red stain

On some round cheek that the sunshine  
dapples,  
Near me where I lie curled  
Under green trees athrong with green apples,  
In a grass-green, apple-green world.

## Beginning and End

**O**NCE it was in my life's beginning,  
Roses were tall in their summer beds,  
Dandelions within my fingers  
Thrust their confident golden heads ;  
Wading waist-deep 'mid the daisies,  
Feeling the grasses about me climb —  
Thus it was in my life's beginning ;  
What have you done to me, Father Time?

So shall it be when life has ended :  
Roses shall bloom above my head,  
Dandelions will know I am lying  
Hidden in grass from foot to head.  
Hidden in grass and hidden in daisies,  
Over my breast I shall feel them climb,  
Thus it will be when life has ended ;  
This will you do to me, Father Time.





## Not at Home

**T**HE Weariness of Idleness,  
She waited all the day  
In the parlor of her neighbor,  
The Weariness of Labor —  
A visit she had long meant to pay.

But not until the evening  
Did her hostess come in sight ;  
Then the Weariness of Labor  
Explained unto her neighbor  
That she lived but a brief hour at night.

## The Wind of Memory

**R**ED curtains shut the storm from sight,  
The inner rooms are live with light ;  
The fireside faces all aglow  
See not the pale ghost in the snow,  
The pale ghost at the window pressed,  
With the wind moaning in her breast.

She sees the face she hurt with scorn,  
The other face where joy, new born,  
Died out at her cheap mockery ;  
The eyes she filled, how bitterly !  
The head that drooped beneath her jest —  
The wind is moaning in her breast.

Invisible, unfelt, unknown,  
She lingers trembling. She alone  
Notes tenderly her vacant place,  
And sees in it her vanished face ;  
She only — of this happy nest !  
The wind is moaning in her breast.

Star-like the happy windows glow,  
Framed in with mile on mile of snow ;  
And from their light a thing of death,

Of grief and memory vanisheth,  
Her sin not deep but unredressed,  
And the wind moaning in her breast.

## Philippa

**A** GENEROUS gentleness that flowed,  
Stream-like, beside a dusty road ;  
Gave laborers shade, and prisoners sun,  
And easeful joy to every one ;  
With liquid melodies for such  
As worked or wearied overmuch,  
And ministrations cool and sweet  
For fevered hands and aching feet.

So delicately fair she moved —  
That stream-like girl, of all beloved.  
Along her path no grief nor care  
But lulled and lightened unaware.  
She bore the sky within her breast,  
And child-like winds her soul caressed,  
Until her spring of life was dried,  
And with a smile Philippa died.

## The Student

**T**HE student sits within his room,  
So small and worn and white ;  
His lamp flames out remote and strange  
Through all the hours of night.

And all day long within his face,  
So small and worn and white,  
His eyes flame out — those lamp-like eyes,  
So weirdly, strangely bright.

## Unspoken

**M**Y lover comes down the long leafy street  
Through tenderly falling rain ;  
His footsteps near our portal veer,  
Go past — then turn again.

O can it be he is knocking below,  
Or here at my door above ?  
So gentle and small it sounds in the hall,  
So loud in the ear of love.

But never a word of love has he said,  
And never a word crave I,  
For why should one long for the daylight  
strong  
When the dawn is in the sky ?

O a dewy rose-garden is the house,  
A garden shut from the sun ;  
The breath of it sweet floats up, as my feet  
Float down to my waiting one.

But if ever a word of love thinks he,  
It falls from his heart still-born ;

Who bends to the rose does not haste to  
close  
His hand around bud and thorn.

The beautiful soul that is in him turns  
His beautiful face agleam ;  
My own soul flies to feast in his eyes,  
Where the silent love-words teem.

Our talk is of books, and of thoughts and  
moods,  
Of the wild flowers in the rain ;  
And he leans his cheek, when we do not  
speak,  
On his chair where my hand had lain.

Yet never a word of love does he say,  
And never a word crave I ;  
For the faint green May would wither  
away  
At the quick touch of July.

And at last — at last we look our last,  
And the dim day grows more dim ;  
But his eyes still shine in these eyes of  
mine,  
And my soul goes forth with him.

For though not a word of love does he say,  
Still never a word crave I;  
For the words of earth are of little worth  
When a song drops out of the sky.



## Under the King

**L**OVE with the deep eyes and soft hair,  
Love with the lily throat and hands,  
Is done to death, and free as air  
Am I of all my King's commands.

How shall I celebrate my joy ?  
Or dance with feet that once were fleet  
In his adorable employ ?  
Or laugh with lips that felt his sweet ?

How can I at his lifeless face  
Aim any sharp or bitter jest,  
Since roguish destiny did place  
That tender target in my breast ?

Nay, let me be sincere and strong ;  
I cannot rid me of my chains,  
I cannot to myself belong,  
My King is dead — his soul still reigns.

## The Secret

**S**OME chance moment life confesses  
That her insect nothingnesses  
Carry honey with their stings,  
But 't is only to their kings —  
Those who know how best to use them,  
Those who know how to refuse them —  
That the secret is made free,  
And souls are loosed from tyranny.

## Limitation

**B**EYOND the far horizon's farthest bound  
A farther boundary lies ;  
No spirit wing can reach the utmost round,  
No spirit eyes.

The soul has limitations such as space,  
Such as eternity ;  
The farthest star to which thou setst thy face  
Belongs to thee.

## Three Years Old

**W**HAT is it like, I wonder, to roam  
Down through the tall grass hidden  
quite ?

To feel very far away from home  
When the dear house is out of sight ?

To want to play with the broken moon  
In the star garden of the skies ?

To sleep through twilight eves of June  
Beneath the sound of lullabies ?

To hold up hurts for all to see,  
Sob at imaginary harms,  
To clasp in welcome a father's knee,  
And fit so well to a mother's arms ?

To have life bounded by one dull road,  
A wood and a pond, and to feel no lack,  
To gaze with pleasure upon a toad,  
And caress a mud-turtle's horny back ?

To follow the robin's cheerful hop  
With all the salt small hands can hold,

And plead in vain for it to stop —  
What is it like to be three years old ?

Ah, once I knew, but 't was long ago ;  
I try to recall it in vain — in vain !  
And now I know I shall never know  
What it is to be a child again.

## Sometime, I Fear

**S**OMETIME, I fear, but God alone knows  
when,

Mine eyes shall gaze on your unseeing eyes,  
On your unheeding ears shall fall my cries,  
Your clasp shall cease, your soul go from my  
ken,  
Your great heart be a fire burned out. — Ah,  
then,

What shall remain for me beneath the skies  
Of glad, or good, or beautiful, or wise,  
That can relume and thrill my life again?

This shall remain, a love that cannot fail,  
A life that joys in your great joy, yet grieves  
In memory of sweet days fled too soon.  
Sadness divine! as when November pale  
Sits broken-hearted 'mong her withered  
leaves,  
And feels the wind about her warm as  
June.

## Joy

WHEN airy joy doth hail me  
I follow on behind,  
And lest my feet should fail me  
I follow on the wind ;  
I hear her lightsome laughter  
Go floating past the door,  
And swift I follow after  
As she flies on before.

When I am faint and falling,  
And lose her skyey wings,  
I hear her liquid calling,  
And feel the charm she flings  
On all the earth and o'er me,  
Then eagerly I rise,  
And see her skirts before me  
Go glittering up the skies.

The best of life would daunt me  
Ungirdled by her grace,  
And foreign demons haunt me  
Whene'er she hides her face.

Up roughest steeps with laughter  
My airy joy doth soar,  
As wind-like I come after,  
And she flies on before.



## In the Dark

**A**LL in the dark he crossed the border !  
All in the dark, for the lamp of faith  
Had never been used, and was not in order —  
So all in the dark he encountered Death.

## Words

**I** LIKE those words that carry in their  
veins

The blood of lions. "Liberty" is one,  
And "Justice," and the heart leaps to the  
sun

When the thrilled note of "Courage! Cour-  
age!" rains

Upon the sorely stricken will. No pains  
Survive when "Life" and "Light," twin  
glories, run

From the quick page to some poor soul  
undone,

And beggar by their glow all other gains.

How splendidly does "Morning" flood our  
night!

How the word "Ocean" drowns our in-  
sect cares,

And drives a strong wind through our  
housed-up grief.

While "Honor" lifts us to the mountain  
height;

And "Loyalty" the heaviest burden bears  
As lightly as a tree a crimson leaf.

## The Wind of Death

**T**HE wind of death that softly blows  
The last warm petal from the rose,  
The last dry leaf from off the tree,  
To-night has come to breathe on me.

There was a time I learned to hate  
As weaker mortals learn to love ;  
The passion held me fixed as fate,  
Burned in my veins early and late —  
But now a wind falls from above —

The wind of death, that silently  
Enshroudeth friend and enemy.

There was a time my soul was thrilled  
By keen ambition's whip and spur ;  
My master forced me where he willed,  
And with his power my life was filled,  
But now the old-time pulses stir

How faintly in the wind of death !  
That bloweth lightly as a breath.

And once, but once, at Love's dear feet  
I yielded strength and life and heart;  
His look turned bitter into sweet,  
His smile made all the world complete —  
The wind blows loves like leaves apart —

The wind of death, that tenderly  
Is blowing 'twixt my love and me.

O wind of death, that darkly blows  
Each separate ship of human woes  
Far out on a mysterious sea,  
I turn, I turn my face to thee.

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